CONSUMER TIME

SEEDS: TO FIGHT FAMINE

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1. SOUND: CASH REGISTER RINGS TWICE...MONEY IN TILL

2. JOHN: It's CONSUMER TIME!

3. SOUND: CASH REGISTER...CLOSE DRAWER

4. ANNCR: During the next fifteen minutes, the National Broadcasting Company and its affiliated independent stations make their facilities available for the presentation of CONSUMER TIME, by the United States Department of Agriculture.

5. CONSUMER: And what is it we're going to learn about today, Johnny?

6. JOHN: We're going to find out some things about seeds. Seeds to fight famine.

7. CONSUMER: You mean that little handful of packets of seeds that I bought the other day can stave off a monstrous big thing like famine?

8. JOHN: You bet it can. Just stick around a bit. For example, listen to the words of a great American, a man named Franklin D. Roosevelt.

9. VOICE: (FILTER) Our own objectives are clear; the objective of smashing the militarism imposed by war lords upon the enslaved people...

10. CONSUMER: We did that...we and our allies.

11. VOICE: (FILTER) The objective of liberating the subjugated nations...

12. CONSUMER: That job's done, too. The people are free.

13. VOICE: (FILTER) The objective of establishing and securing Freedom from Want...everywhere in the world.

14. CONSUMER: No...that job is not done. There are millions of people still in want...

15. JOHN: Yes...millions of people who don't have enough to eat. Children who are growing up too slowly, who will be underdeveloped mentally, who...

16. CONSUMER: Children who are hungry all the time.

17. JOHN: That's right. They just don't get enough to eat. People who get only a third to a half as much to eat as the average American.

18. CONSUMER: Oh...it's...it's just horrible to think about, Johnny! Here in America...we live so well, almost all of us. We have plenty to eat...and over there...well, it's easy to see why we're being urged to eat less bread and less fats of all kinds, so more of it can be shipped overseas.

19. JOHN: And why all of us are being urged to plant Victory Gardens again this year.

20. CONSUMER: Oh...I'm doing that. Almost everyone in my neighborhood is planning to have a Victory Garden again. That's why I bought those seeds the other day. Of course, mine won't be a very big garden...

21. JOHN: But every bit of food helps...and even a small garden, if it's well cared for, can add to the supply of food. It looks as though all the food we can produce here in the United States and all that can be produced everywhere else...still won't be enough to keep some people somewhere in the world from being hungry.

22. CONSUMER: But I understand the farmers are planting just millions of acres of crops of all kinds.

23. JOHN: Yes, indeed! But farmers in some other countries can't do that. So some people will go hungry. Well...the point I'm getting at is that all our food starts with seeds. Seeds for your garden...seeds for wheat...seeds for corn and hay to feed livestock. We depend just a whole lot on seeds for the food we eat.

24. CONSUMER: Just where do we get our seeds, Johnny? I don't know that I'd ever given it much thought. They just appear in the stores in the springtime...or they come from the seed company after you've looked at all the beautiful pictures of tomatoes and radishes and summer squash. Where do they come from?

25. JOHN: Now you're trying to embarrass me... But I have a friend who's a seed expert and I know he can tell us.

26. EXPERT: Is this where I come in?

27. JOHN: It certainly is. And can you tell us first of all...where do our seeds come from?

28. EXPERT: Now...that isn't easy to answer. Seeds come from just about everywhere. And some of them aren't seeds at all. Potatoes, for example. The things we plant in our gardens are the tubers...same as we eat. Except that the best seed potatoes are especially grown for seed...usually in some of the northern states...in fields that are carefully inspected to be sure they're free from disease and that they're the right variety.

29. CONSUMER: You mean...there are some farmers who make a speciality of growing potatoes for seed?

30. EXPERT: Yes indeed. And it's a specialized business all its own. Growing any kind of seed is highly specialized. Now...you take the business of producing seed for our biggest...most important crop.

31. JOHN: Our most important crop. That must be corn.

32. EXPERT: That's right. One acre out of every four that's in crops of any kind is planted to corn. It takes a lot of seed to plant 95 million acres of corn.

33. CONSUMER: I can believe that.

34. EXPERT: And in recent years...most of that seed corn has been hybrid seed. Using hybrid seed, it's possible for a farmer to get a corn that's ideal...or nearly idea...for his particular climate and his kind of soil. It lets him grow corn that matures early enough...stands up better against wind and hailstorms...is more resistant to insects...and because of these things...it produces more bushels of corn to the acre.

35. CONSUMER: I'm not sure that I understand just how this...this hybrid business works...but it seems wonderful.

36. EXPERT: Wonderful's a good word for it. It's given us a lot more corn to feed our livestock, without planting more acres. Now the small grains...like wheat and oats, and rye and barley...they're a little easier to produce. The same thing is true of the hay crops...timothy, clover, alfalfa. If you harvest a crop of cadet oats...and plant the seed... you'll get cadet oats again the next year. Or, if you save seed from Fordhook lima beans and plant it...you'll get Fordhook lima beans.

37. CONSUMER: Now that makes sense to me. I can understand that. Or at least, I think I do.

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38. EXPERT: Well, that part of it isn't hard to understand. But of course, plant breeders are always crossing varieties, trying to find new and better kinds of crops. And they're making steady progress. If you compare a seed catalogue of today with one printed 25 years ago, you'll find a great many changes...because we have new varieties of vegetables that have proved themselves to be better than the old ones.

39. CONSUMER: You know...I can't think of any book that's more fascinating to look at than a seed catalogue. The pictures always make the vegetables look so big and tender and crisp.

40. JOHN: Only in my garden they never turn out quite so big--or tender...or crisp as the catalogue says they should.

41. EXPERT: Of course...it could be that you don't give your garden as much cultivation, and fertilizer and water as it needs to produce ideal vegetables.

42. JOHN: Now that could be. It just could be.

43. EXPERT: You know...back of that beautifully illustrated seed catalogue there's a great deal of work...and many interesting stories. Would you like to make a quick tour...and see some of it?

44. CONSUMER: Why...yes, I would.

45. JOHN: Of course. Where do we go?

46. EXPERT: Well...first we'll go 'way out west,,.to the part of the country where most of our vegetable seed is grown. Just step into our private plane...the Vitamin Special...and we'll be off.

47. SOUND: PLANE ENGINE FADE IN UP QUICKLY TO FULL AND DOWN.

48. WESTERNER: Welcome to Longview Valley, folks. If it's mountain scenery, or irrigated farmland, or vegetable seeds you're interested in...take your choice. We've got 'em all.

49. CONSUMER: Well...the scenery is wonderful...but really it's vegetable seeds that we're most interested in just now.

50. WESTERNER: Well, raisin' vegetable seeds is my business. Wonderful climate for it here. Lots of places...vegetables just don't develop satisfactory seeds, or they're so weak they don't germinate well, or they don't set enough seed that it pays to harvest it. But here...we get a pretty good yield most years.

51. JOHN: When you get enough rain, I suppose.

52. WESTERNER: You're from back East, aren't ya? We don't depend on rain out here. Can't depend on it, 'cause we don't get enough to make a crop, and then when you're raising seed, you gotta get the water on at just the right time to make sure the seed sets and then develops to full size. So we irrigate. That way, we put the water on when the crop needs it.

53. CONSUMER: Just standing here and looking up and down the valley, it seems as though there should be enough seed produced here to plant Victory Gardens for the whole world.

54. WESTERNER: Well, it may look like it...but that's not quite the case, lady. Lots of fine irrigated valleys like this all through the west...growin' vegetable seed. Some in the north...for crops that do best in a cool climate...and others down South ...Arizona and California...for crops that need a lot of heat and sun.

55. CONSUMER: Then all crops don't like the same kind of climate?

56. WESTERNER: Not by a long shot, ma'am. You've got to know your onions, as the sayin' goes. Your onions and your cabbage and carrots and radishes...if you're going to get good seed crops from 'em. Take cabbage for example....

57. CONSUMER: What about cabbage?

58. WESTERNER: Well...it takes cabbage two years to set a crop of seed. It'll produce a head one year...and then the next year that head'll produce seed.

59. CONSUMER: Well...at home we always just put out the plants.

60. WESTERNER: Sure...and where did the plants come from?

61. CONSUMER: Why...from seed I guess.

62. WESTERNER: Of course. And just like I say...it takes two years to produce cabbage seed. Or any members of the cabbage family... cauliflower, brussel sprouts, kohlrabi. Same way with onions. And beets and carrots and parsnips have to grow two years. Get a crop of roots the first season...harvest the roots and set 'em out again, and get a crop of seed the second year.

63. JOHN: Then you don't have a crop of carrots...and a crop of carrot seed from the same plants.

64. WESTERNER: If you sell the carrot roots you can't set 'em out to make a seed crop.

65. EXPERT: You've probably expanded your acreage of vegetables for seed in recent years, haven't you?

66. WESTERNER: Oh yes. Had to. Just had so many orders from the big seed houses...and from the government...we had to grow more. Y'see, we used to get lots of vegetable seed from Europe. Thought we couldn't grow it nearly as well in our own country. But when Hitler started gobblin' up Europe, we couldn't import vegetable seed any more; so we began growin' more of our own. We produced three times as many seeds last year as we did before the war. Understand we've turned the tables too. We're shippin' vegetable seeds to Europe now.

67. EXPERT: Yes...about 25 million pounds for this year's crop...to plant their gardens and seed their fields...so they can produce their own food.

Well...we should be on our way. Let's see where this vegetable seed goes...after it's been grown...harvested... put in big bags...each one carefully labeled. Into our plane again...and we're off.

68. SOUND: PLANE ENGINE FADE IN UP AND DOWN, UNDER . . . FADE IN SOUND OF LIGHT MACHINERY RUNNING.

69. SEEDSMAN: (APPROACHING MIKE) No...we're not the largest seed firm... but we like to think we're one of the best. Reliability is a thing that we're proud of...and it's the keynote of our success. We ship seeds all over the country...to stores... and by mail order.

70. JOHN: This is an interesting machine here. I never knew how packages of seed were filled before. What kind of seed is this?

71. SEEDSMAN: This is lettuce seed. A new variety...called Slobolt. Developed by the Department of Agriculture and tested for several years to make sure it would do well over most of the United States. The seed is grown under our supervision by specialists in seed production out west...

72. CONSUMER: Yes...we know something about how it's grown.

73. SEEDSMAN: Some of our seeds we grow on our own farms...and some of it under contract. Each variety is grown and harvested separately...away from other varieties that might mix with it ...and very carefully labeled as to kind and variety. Then it's shipped in to the plant here...and this is where we do the packing.

74. JOHN: Look how this wheel goes round and round...with lots of little scoops on it...and each one picks up just so much seed... carries it on around the wheel...and dumps it into an envelope. Say this is as much fun as an electric train.

75. SEEDSMAN: Here's a different type of machine over here for large seeds, like peas and beans. The seed is dumped into the hopper at the top...and falls down. There's a little scale inside... and when enough seed gets into the pan it trips a lever... and the seed slides down into a package. Then the package is sealed...and ready to go on its way to your mail box... or to your store.

We pack only one variety of one kind of seed at a time on a machine, of course...and so when we're packing white icicle radishes...there's no chance of our getting another variety of radish mixed in. Each varitey was grown in an isolated field. The bag containing the seed was labeled in the field.. and it's all carefully inspected at every step...so we know no other variety goes into the package labeled White Icicle.

76. CONSUMER: I just don't see how you keep them all straight. With so many different kinds of vegetables...and so many different varieties of each kind.

77. SEEDSMAN: Well...it's no secret...it simply takes orderly cataloguing and storing in the warehouse...and care all through the plant to keep three thousand varieties straight. We want to give you the varieties you order...true to type...and seeds that are well grown and viable...that is, healthy seeds that will germinate well and produce good vegetables...if you treat them right.

78. JOHN: I suppose there's some way of testing the seeds, isn't there?

79. SEEDSMAN: Oh yes...we have our own laboratory for testing every batch of seed for its purity and germination. And then the State tests the seeds...to make sure it will germinate up to a certain percentage...and that there is a minimum of other kinds of seeds in the lot. They're especially careful about weed seeds...and so are we. And the Federal Government also runs extensive tests on seeds of all kinds. The Government is interested in protecting the consumer...and we're interested in keeping up our standards. It's just good business.

80. JOHN: By the way...with all the seeds that I understand we're shipping to Europe...are we going to have enough left here at home? Enough to take care of our Victory Gardens...and the commercial gardens?

81. SEEDSMAN: Yes...the supply of vegetable seeds is good. Even though we're shipping millions of pounds to Europe, we'll have plenty left at home. For all the Victory Gardeners I'd suggest, however, that you order your seeds right away... or go to the store and buy them...just so you'll be sure to have the varieties you want for your garden.

82. EXPERT: And now...back to our Vitamin Special plane once more.

83. SOUND: FADE FACTORY NOISE OUT . . . ENGINE NOISE FADES IN FAST UP DOWN AND OUT.

84. EXPERT: Well that's a brief version of the story of seed...and the big industry that makes it possible for us to replenish our food supply every year.

85. CONSUMER: And there never was a year when replenishing our food supply was more important to us, and to our friends in other countries.

86. JOHN: Yes, it looks as though seeds are mighty important if we're going to reach that objective....

87. VOICE: (FILTER) The objective of establishing and securing Freedom from Want everywhere in the world.

88. CONSUMER: Now...Johnny...do you have a word about next week's program?

89. JOHN: Next week...we're going to learn about the new flour...how to use it...and what it means to a hungry world.

90. CONSUMER: Be with us again next week ....for another edition of...

91. SOUND: CASH REGISTER...

92. ANNCR: CONSUMER TIME!

93. SOUND: CASH REGISTER...CLOSE DRAWER.

94. ANNCR: CONSUMER TIME, written by John Baker, is presented by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, through the facilities of the National Broadcasting Company and its affiliated independent stations. It comes to you from Washington, D.C.

This is NBC, the National Broadcasting Company.